

Title: The Struggle To Be Human

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3-sentence summary of paper: This paper's focus is on resolving controversy/conflict by fully understanding our opponents and making ourselves fully understood. Nichols addresses three issues: (1) listening contributions of ten individuals who have laid the foundation for the ILA; (2) the relationship between ILA's goals and Maslow's hierarchy of human needs; and (3) eleven principles as well as an action plan to guide the ILA in scientifically proving that "understanding and being understood" is essential not only to reducing external and internal conflict but also to making ourselves more fully human.

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The Struggle To Be Human
Keynote Address by Dr. Ralph G. Nichols
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In this period of enormous hostility and tension with millions of people wondering if World War III is about to close in on us, what a satisfaction it is to be associated with the formation of an International Listening Association. Just the name of our organization should in itself arouse curiosity and have a wholesome influence.

For more than two million years, if Louis Leakey is correct, whenever two hostile individuals or forces met head-on only two options seemed available to them: immediate physical combat, or a quick cowardly retreat by one adversary or the other. As the centuries passed and we very slowly became a bit more civilized, a third option began to take form. I think it all happened many centuries ago when the weaker of two leaders in confrontation suddenly and unexpectedly called out, "Let's talk about this before we fight." His opponent, caught a bit off-balance agreed, not seeing how it could cost him anything and might give him a victory without a battle. The third option hasn't been of much value. It soon fell into a pattern of merely inserting a period of bitter verbal controversy between confrontation and conflict. No doubt it has resulted in the avoidance of a few battles, but it certainly has not succeeded in eliminating violence and aggression. Why? Because inserting a time for talk has to this day merely resulted in highly biased declamation by both adversaries; in speeches crammed with accusation and denunciation, epithet and invective, the making of threats and the setting of deadlines.

Now here tonight in Atlanta, we are starting off on a course of action which just could give real meaning and productivity to the third option for resolving controversy. Perhaps our Association can give real strength to the "talking-it-over interval" between confrontation and conflict. What would happen if even half of the leaders in international conflict were aware of the advantages derived from fully understanding their opponents, and making themselves fully understood? Certainly the seven goals established for the ILA should be a source of pride. They constitute a structure which promises significant growth and influence.

As our hopes take form and our plans progress, what items should be of particular concern to us at this moment? I am not certain of my logic, but with your permission I should like to do three things. (Even without your permission, I shall probably go ahead and do them anyway.)

My first concern is to list and quickly identify the contributions of ten persons, most of them now deceased, who in one sense or another laid the foundation for our new organization. Curiously enough, they came from every corner of our country.

First, take four excitement makers. Earliest of them all, I think, was Richard Hubbell. He wrote a book and in it declared without equivocation that 98% of all that a man learns in his lifetime he learns through his eyes or through his ears. Perhaps he exaggerated a little bit, but not much. We now believe the figure to be 95%, with 5% left over for our other sensory mechanisms. The next excitement maker, as most of you know, was Paul Rankin. He did his research at Ohio State University, and reported that 70% of our waking day is devoted to interpersonal communication; and 45% of that 70% is spent in listening to one another. The third excitement producer was Harry Goldstein from Columbia University. He compared the relative efficiency of the ear and the eye at seven carefully controlled rates of presentation. He found no statistically significant difference in comprehension by either mode even though at the top rate of presentation his subjects were listening to human speech at a rate higher than they had ever before heard it. The fourth excitement producer was Miriam Wilt, an elementary school teacher in Illinois. From her studies she reported that 57% of the classroom periods in the grade schools of America is spent in teacher talk. Later research at Michigan State and Minnesota went on to

show that the same figure is approximately true in our high schools; and that at university freshmen levels, 80% of the classroom periods is often spent in professor talk. How could one help but wonder what was going on at the other end of all this teacher talk?

After these four excitement makers came four scholars, or suppliers. First of these was Paul Bagwell. He was put in charge of the biggest communication program in the nation at that time, at Michigan State University. Their stated objective was to improve the reading, writing, speaking, and listening of their thousands of underclassmen. He declared that if listening improvement was one of their stated goals, they should spend a fourth of their energy on it. He delegated this responsibility specifically to several of his staff members. Produce they did. Much good material has resulted. The second of these scholars and suppliers was James I. Brown at the University of Minnesota. Jim felt that to prove to people that listening comprehension can be improved, we ought to have a standardized test of effective listening. He talked it over with one of our Deans, who was very discouraging. He said, "Professor Brown, that's cognition you're talking about. Reading comprehension, listening comprehension, cognition--they're all the same thing. You can't do anything about them. Students are born with certain powers, or without them. I'd forget it." But Jim was a stubborn character, and he went ahead and produced his Brown-Carlson Test of Listening Comprehension. I'm sure you are all acquainted with it. The third supplier was Sam Duker. You all know his three books: Listening Bibliography, Listening Readings, and Listening in the Elementary School. All are tremendous contributions to our field. The fourth and last of these suppliers was a Californian. He must have been born with a peculiar set of genes that told him to measure everything. Seth Fessenden produced an unending stream of statistical studies trying this technique and that to improve the listening of his students. His contributions were important.

Finally, two expanders of our area appeared. One, Grant Fairbanks at the University of Iowa and later at the University of Illinois, was a chopper and splicer. He would take a tape recording of a previously recorded speech, cut it all up in little pieces, and then paste the residues together. Through this technique he could speed up the presentation time to any degree desired, and determine the consequent effect upon listener comprehension. Then he devised better techniques. He rotated charging heads over a previously recorded tape, re-recording little pieces of it to secure any increased speed desirable. Refinement after refinement of both technique and product followed. The ultimate conclusion? Simply that it is possible for people to listen to human speech at twice the rate, perhaps three times the rate, that they normally hear it without any significant loss of comprehension of it. The second expander of our field was a professor at Louisiana State University, Wesley Wiksell. Wes spent much of his energy upon adult education, particularly with industrial groups. He wrote a book entitled Understanding and Being Understood. I don't know how great the book is, but I feel certain that no one could have devised a better title. The most basic of all human needs is to understand and to be understood.

How I wish these ten men and women could be here with us this evening to share our hope, our faith, and our excitement. Somehow I feel personally indebted to every one of them.

For my second concern, I should like to update for you a psychological concept which is very closely related to the goals that we have established for the ILA. The longer one thinks about it, the more impressive the concept becomes.

Away back in 1954 a man named Abraham Maslow wrote a book entitled Toward A Psychology of Being. In it he explained that all people have common needs. The lowest and most fundamental of these needs is to survive; the next, to feel secure; the third, to belong to a group wherein they are appreciated; fourth, to have opportunity for personal growth; and fifth, at the very top, to enjoy full self-actualization. The total concept was labeled *The Hierarchy of Human Needs*. He published his book, and industry was immediately fascinated. Thoughtful employees were impressed by what seemed to be some very elemental truths. Thoughtful employers felt they were glimpsing a possible common ground where employers and employees might get together and resolve their disputes and avoid costly strikes which might send both factions into bankruptcy. The

concept contributed to programs involving stock-option purchases, profit-sharing, the awarding of Christmas bonuses to unusually productive workers, and the use of third-party mediation and arbitration.

Unfortunately the reception by academicians and fellow psychologists was anything but positive. They denounced Maslow's effort on every possible ground. "What idiocy is this?" they queried. "He has no scientific evidence to prove his ideas. He has no control group; and he has no experimental group to compare with it. There's nothing here but theory. And look at those levels! He has no separation of instinctive needs, and acquired or hereditary needs. The lowest level of survival is obvious idiocy, for we have many people who want to die as martyrs; and many others who want to commit suicide. His 'needs' are not universal; yet he calls them universal. The second level is equally idiotic. He says everybody needs to feel secure. Not true. What many of us need in this world is insecurity. How are we ever going to learn something, or do anything important, without insecurity? And his third level! What is he talking about? We already belong to more groups than we can handle. Look at his fourth level, growth. Who needs it? Hasn't he seen that California study where 70% of the respondents said they didn't want leadership positions in this world? That they wanted to be followers, wanted to avoid responsibility, actually wanted regimentation? Obviously Maslow is warped. His fifth level of self-actualization is the worst-conceived of them all. It glorifies the ego and egocentrism; it is completely selfish. Yet he advocates it, and claims it is the highest need of all. Ridiculous! Let the concept of universal human needs die of its own idiocy."

Well, many people did seem to forget Maslow's "Hierarchy" for a time. Discussion of it died down in some quarters. But not so in industrial circles! The Ford Motor Company claimed it wanted to know its customers' needs, and adopted the slogan "We listen better." The Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company now says, "We hear you," and the Sperry Rand Corporation says, "We understand the importance of listening."

And then in 1968, the "Hierarchy of Human Needs" concept again gained widespread public attention. Abraham Maslow wrote a second edition of his book Toward a Psychology of Being, and in it answered many of the charges of his critics. To the non-universality argument he replied that, of course, there are exceptions to all generalizations; that, of course, there are some sick people who want to commit suicide, but that healthy people want to survive in this world. With respect to security, he explained two entirely different kinds of efforts toward this goal. The vast majority of people seek their security in the acquirement of property, prestige, and armed power--and there is never enough to go around. And then there are some who seek their security through cooperative effort, clearer communication, justice and service. Which is the better way? How can we know? We have only now just discovered the missing link between the anthropoid ape and civilized man. It's us! One day perhaps we'll discover which is the better road to take. One thing is certain: an absolute need of every human being is for affection. We must have love within the family, tribe, clan or organization. It is one universal need none can disprove. And to the charge that many persons prefer to vegetate instead of grow, Maslow replies that healthy people want to make their lives more useful; those who are ailing a bit may prefer to take orders. Finally, in his new edition, Maslow concedes that his original term of "self-actualization" was ill-chosen and widely misinterpreted; that what he really meant was precisely the opposite of selfishness and egocentrism; that the highest need of mankind is "to become fully human," a term that he should have used instead of "self-actualization" in his 1954 edition. The most elemental function of any healthy culture, he concludes, is to help people to become more civilized.

Where does the hierarchy of human needs concept stand today? What is its present status? I think it is alive and well. I think it transcends nationality, culture, religion, race, color, and sex. I like it primarily because the listening factor permeates every single level of it. I deeply believe that the most important function of any healthy culture is to help all members of the human species to become more fully human, more completely civilized.

The one problem that really troubles us the most is the one about which we know the least and should know the most. It is this: Why do human beings suddenly become filled with hostility and hatred, and without warning

break into open violence and destructiveness? The negative thinker has an answer. He says that it's a deeply-laid human instinct; that it's been with us for a million years, and will be with us for another million; that we'd better forget about it. The positive thinker has a different response. He says: "Hold on a minute. Is it not just possible that this sudden violence and hatred is the result of the total frustration an individual suffers when he cannot make himself understood, and is completely unable to grasp what others are saying to him? If so, can we call the problem really insoluble?"

Now, I come to the third and last concern in my talk. What can our ILA do to improve the culture of which we are a part? How can we help ourselves and others to become more fully human? The answer would seem to depend directly upon what we now know; upon what we have already learned. Almost everyone in this room, perhaps all of us, have been much concerned with interpersonal problems from a perspective that is essentially internal to the culture in which we live and operate. I have tried to glean from all the sources that I could reach from my south Florida home a list of things which it seems to me we already know, have already learned. My thought has been that perhaps we have at hand some useful tools or guiding principles we can put to work in the years ahead. Permit me to read my list of eleven items of things I think we already know:

1. The most basic of all human needs is to understand and to be understood.
2. It is almost impossible to hate a person whom we fully understand.
3. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.
4. We are at the mercy of those who understand us better than we understand them.
5. When people make a decision, it is for their reasons, not ours.
6. The wise listener is attentive, and non-evaluative; he asks only unslanted questions, and praises those statements by an adversary which he can honestly praise.
7. We must face with courage the fact that when we succeed in "hearing a person out," our own position may become quite modified.
8. Loyalty is not the highest of all virtues, normally being surpassed by honesty, compassion, and justice.
9. Common human needs do provide our best basis for the resolution of conflict.
10. When truth and falsehood are presented with equal skill, truth is always more persuasive.
11. The Delphi Technique Questionnaire is an invaluable tool for decreasing bitter controversy.

Let me digress for about one minute to explain the Delphi Questionnaire. Some of you may not be familiar with it.

In 1960 the Rand Corporation dropped their nonproductive attempts to settle labor disputes by promptly scheduling discussion sessions to be attended by management and labor representatives. Instead they devised and circulated a carefully prepared questionnaire to the representatives of both factions, asking each individual to respond to all questions thoughtfully and to return his copy the following day. The common needs of management and labor were involved in many of the questions asked, but numerous questions permitted strongly partisan replies as well. Immediately enough duplicate copies were made of each respondent's answers to provide all representatives with a copy of everybody else's answers. Each representative was urged to read and consider for a full week the total spectrum of response from the first circulation of the questionnaire. At the end of a week the whole procedure was repeated. After another week, a third collection of the questionnaires was made. Each circulation of the questionnaire results in markedly different replies, but three circulations produce as much of a common consensus as is attainable. The representatives then meet for face-to-face discussion, and satisfactory solutions are normally soon reached. Before Delphi, real listening in a committee meeting had been a near impossibility. Each member's function had been to talk, and while others were talking to shore up one's original position. In establishing the Delphi Technique a thoughtful conversation in which everyone gets a chance to listen is provided. The background of small talk and the recurrent booms of vanity are eliminated at the outset, and there is time to think.

Can we use the Delphi Technique and what we have learned from interpersonal communication research to reduce hostility, tension, and conflict in our culture and in our world? I think we can. I should like to urge that a major portion of our future research program should involve the application of what we already know and have in hand to external as well as internal conflicts. Why? Because the time has come for academicians to prove scientifically that "understanding and being understood" is not just wishful thinking, but is a goal of provable attainment even by enormous adversary groups of diverse nationality and culture. Science is the only tool we have that will drive the truth down reluctant throats. Let's put it to work.

"Too complicated," you're thinking. "Too uncontrollable." But wait. What would we need in order to do experimental studies with large groups hostile to one another?

First off, we need large and available adversary-faction groups. We have them right at our fingertips. In most communities and on most campuses we have one or more of the following pairings:

Student militants	versus	Student pacifists
Iranian students	versus	American students
Black students	versus	White students
Jewish students	versus	Palestinian students
Female students	versus	Male students
Teenagers	versus	Senior Citizens
Unionized public employees	versus	Nonunionized taxpayers

Once the pairing is settled upon we need volunteers willing to state their opinions from each of the adversary groups. (Ideally it would be good to have 200 from each group; 100 to constitute the control group; 100 to compose the experimental group.)

Next, we need financial grants from foundation, corporate, or governmental sources to defray the expenses involved in our research programs. Let us use our persuasive skills to obtain them.

Next, we need carefully composed Delphi Technique questionnaires. We can make our own. We need a series of talk sessions following conventional Delphi Technique procedure. We schedule them ourselves, and supervise the conducting of them. As communication experts, we should challenge the adversary faction representatives attending these sessions to reach every resolution of remaining differences attainable. An emphasis upon the 11 guiding principles mentioned earlier should prove useful during the critical intervals of the discussions. Finally, we need an analysis of the changes within the experimental groups as compared with those within the control groups. (These data to be obtained by a fourth and final circulation of the Delphi questionnaire at the conclusion of the entire research program.)

Will we succeed in obtaining statistically significant results through this kind of research? I firmly believe we will. If so, we shall have proved that "talking it out" is better than warfare; we shall have done what we could to make ourselves more civilized, more fully human.

The poet, Harry Romaine, wrote some lines I've always liked. He said:

"At the Muezzin's call to prayer, the kneeling faithful thronged the square;
While from Pushkara's lofty height, a dark priest chanted Brahma's might.
Amidst the monastery's weeds, an old Franciscan told his beads;
While to the Synagogue there came, a Jew, to praise Jehovah's name.
Then the one great God looked down and smiled, and counted each his loving child;
For Moslem, Brahmin, Christian, Jew reached Him through the Gods they knew."

Carl Sandburg put it tersely. He said, "Man is a long time coming. Man will yet win."

And the Chinese philosopher, Lin Yutang, proclaimed: "There is more good in this earth than we normally realize. This earth is good!"